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SUBJECT: GABON: OIL REFINERY STRIKE LEADS TO FUEL SHORTAGES
IN LIBREVILLE

REF: LIBREVILLE 0096

¶1. (SBU) A threatened labor action in Gabon's critical oil sector came to fruition March 13 when employees of SOGARA, the country's only oil refinery, went on strike. According to Sylvain Pamlou, spokesperson for the Organization Nationale des Employees du Petrole (ONEP), the union representing the petroleum sector, workers were demanding adherence to terms agreed by the company and the Gabonese government, yet never implemented (Reftel).

¶2. (SBU) Pamlou said that three-way negotiations between SOGARA, ONEP, and GOG began immediately once the strike began, but no progress was made until early April when fuel stations around Libreville and throughout Gabon started to experience shortages of gasoline. Though negotiations are still ongoing, Pamlou said that striking workers went back to work on April 8 after ONEP received sufficient guarantees that the workers demands would be met.

¶3. (SBU) Supplies of diesel fuel were never interrupted; gasoline, however, remains difficult to find in Libreville. It is expected to take at least a week before the situation returns to normal and gasoline is readily available. A union spokesman told us that he is hopeful remaining issues will be resolved without another strike. However, labor-management relations in Gabon's oil sector, like elsewhere in the country, are fraught with unkept promises, and will remain tense.
REDDICK